



Bloody Benevolence and Soupy Sweetness

...by Ms. Devnew and Mr. Merritt



What do blood and soup have in common? No, this isn't a new recipe on some scary Food Network/Sci-Fi Channel combination. This is how Ms. Devnew and Mr. Merritt started their quest to change the world one good deed at a time.

The drive to Norfolk slinked smoothly by as the two English teachers whisked down Interstate 264. Arriving at the American Red Cross, they signed in and nervously waited to be called. To Mr. Merritt's surprise and Ms. Devnew's dismay, Mr. Merritt was nixed from giving—a year he had to wait and he could donate again. Now his role was moral support for his teaching teammate.

After a quick interview, a long computer health questionnaire, and a tiny finger prick for blood, Ms. Devnew was on her way to providing platelets for hemophiliacs, burn victims, cancer patients, and even little kids stricken with horrible diseases. Green with queasiness, Mr. Merritt sat beside her as the blood flowed from her arm, into a machine, and back into her arm, extracting the life-giving gold. An hour later, they were on their way to a delicious dinner at their favorite restaurant to replenish the nutrients lovingly robbed from Ms. Devnew's body.



Their next adventure into the world of kindness brought them to the doors of the Union Mission Ministries in Norfolk. Nervous and excited, Ms. Devnew and Mr. Merritt walked through the entrance of the magnificent old building and were introduced to the many faces of the homeless. After a quick interview with Mrs. Jones, the volunteer coordinator, they ascended the shiny marble stairs to a cafeteria full of down-on-their-luck transients. Grocery bags full of simple belongings were clutched by people who treasured them. On the wall was a rustic wooden sign which read, "Jesus Saves"—a statement that every hungry person in the room probably agreed with.

The two teachers were introduced to Sam, the chef and cafeteria manager. "The Devil is always after you," he said, commenting about his former life of homelessness. "I'm blessed to have this place to help me get back on my feet." Sam was a part of the work program designed to give homeless people who are working a good meal and a place to stay. "When I look at these people, I think of myself. I try not to forget where I came from."

Ms. Devnew and Mr. Merritt quickly got ready to help. On snapped a snazzy pair of rubber gloves, and blonde curls were tamed by hairnets. As they ladled soup from an enormous vat into flimsy paper bowls, they smiled and spoke to the down-on-their-luck crew. *God bless yous* and *thank yous* abounded, and these teaching partners felt both humbled and blessed to be a part of this important endeavor.



The Red Cross and the Union Mission make a difference in the lives of so many people every day. What started off as a simple example for a class project, turned into life-altering, mind-boggling experiences that these two teachers will take away with them forever. Kindness—it's a good thing.